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U.S. Rep. Allen West was a guest this past Saturday when Rebuilding Together Broward County joined up with the Rotary Club to help remodel Robert Lyons' kitchen.

"Rebuilding Together asked me to come and be a part of this," West said, just after pulling up on his motorcycle in front of Lyons' home on Northwest 17th Street in Fort Lauderdale. "This is the type of thing I believe we Americans — and our civic organizations — have to do.

"Here's a man who served his country in Korea," West said. "My father served in World War Two. My older brother was wounded in Khe Sahn. So I'm close to something like this that helps and respects our veterans."

Power equipment roared inside Lyons' home, as volunteers began dismantling the old kitchen. The walls were going next.

"It isn't often I get to smash things," West said.

Lyons' Korean service qualified him for help from the both groups seeking to honor area veterans this past weekend. Lyons is a homeowner "who lives on a fixed income of Social Security and perhaps VA benefits," said Sandra Einhorn, executive director of Rebuilding Together.

"These only get them so far," Einhorn said. "When they need something expensive, like roof repair or significant plumbing work, they can't afford it. These are the homeowners we typically serve."

The staging area for the day's efforts, which began as the Rotary Club of Fort Lauderdale's

Power of One Hour program, was the wide front porch of Archways, a drug and alcohol abuse rehab facility on Northeast 13th Street. They aimed to honor veterans and their neighborhoods by dispatching volunteers through the city's northeastern section to mow, paint and clean.

"It's a chance to create community," said Jorg Hruschka, a city building inspector and a community service chairman for the Rotary.

Hruschka moved quickly amid piles of rakes and brooms, boxes of work gloves and three wheelbarrows, clutching an assignment sheet and issuing instructions.

"When we wanted to say 'thank you' to the veterans we went to Lori Parrish [the county property appraiser], who gave us a list of homeowners with veterans' exemptions," he said.

"This isn't charity, it's a matter of gratitude."

"I'm not a guy that needs this," said Charles Black, as volunteers spread terra cotta paint on his house Northeast 11th Avenue. Black is a 20-year Navy veteran. He's also owns a sign company — Signs by Tomorrow — and a member of the Chamber of Commerce and Riverwalk Trust.

"When I told them I was thinking of painting my house, they said, 'you're the perfect candidate.'"

John Crawford, 80, was one of five veterans getting assistance on this day. Volunteers bustled about the carport of his home on Northeast 16th Street with paint buckets and rollers.

"I scraped it all down," said Crawford, a Korean War veteran and retired staffer at the city's Department of Parks and Recreation. "But I get very tired trying to do this. The volunteers are helping a lot."

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